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E**THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE**

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

13 December 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : National Intelligence Officer for the USSR
and Eastern Europe

SUBJECT : The State of Play in the USSR

1. I convened a community meeting on 9 December to exchange views on the first weeks of Andropov's rule. The most interesting issues discussed were the following:

- A. Andropov's Accession to Power: Analysts remain divided about the manner in which Andropov assumed power. Some feel very strongly that he staged a coup. However, they are not able to prove that Andropov had violated the rules of the Soviet political game--rules which, after all, have always been very flexible about the way power is used. In the weeks to come we may find out more about allegations of a "rump" Central Committee and Politburo meetings, but for now acceptance or rejection of the coup theory does not affect the way analysts feel about Andropov's hold on power: strong but with important personnel changes to occur before he can confidently push through his own domestic program.
- B. Andropov's Health: Thanks in part to the excellent medical care given to Politburo members, Andropov is likely to stay healthy and has a 50% chance of being alive ten years from now. However, we can expect that he will be periodically hospitalized for treatment of his hypertension and angina pectoris brought about by weakened heart muscles. We should not be surprised if he disappears for periods as long as six to eight weeks. When he does, there will probably be rumors of his death. There is only a 5% chance that he will die within the year.
- C. Personnel Changes: The significance of the appointments made so far is ambiguous. Changes of leadership in the ideological field are very interesting but nobody knows for sure that they mean for Andropov's position or for

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the direction of policy. Interestingly, most of the changes were rumored since the death of Suslov last January. One rumor which has yet to be realized is the replacement of the 74-year old Yepishev as head of the Armed Forces Political Directorate.

- D. Aliyev's Promotion: Aliyev's appointment as Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers is puzzling since he does not have the economic background to be a member of what is in effect an economic council. Some analysts felt that he was chosen because of Azerbaydzhan's good economic performance during his rule; others thought he was selected because of his anti-corruption reputation and usefulness of his KGB background in waging an anti-corruption campaign on a national level. The extended play given his KGB background in the announcement of his promotion supports the latter theory. One analyst reported that a Soviet emigre stated that the choice of words in that announcement ("operative worker" of the KGB) was denigrating and therefore thought that somebody has done Aliyev a bad turn. (Comment: We have since checked with other Soviet emigres. They confirmed that these words have had a slightly pejorative connotation in the USSR. However, they felt that the use of these words in reporting a promotion to the Politburo and to the Council of Ministers were part of a larger campaign to give greater respectability to the KGB.)
- E. Inconsonance in the Press: The Soviet press continues to speak with several voices, suggesting either confusion or conflict. Red Star in particular has stressed the more militant aspects of Andropov's statements--which is not surprising--as well as the desirability for collectivity --which is not so easy to explain. It could be designed to emphasize Ustinov's role in decisionmaking.
- F. The Bottom Line: A conflict situation still exists below the top level and Andropov, having forged an alliance to gain power, must still forge a true ruling alliance. The clearest sign that conflict remains pronounced and deep would be the failure to elect a Supreme Soviet Presidium Chairman within the next 6 to 8 weeks.

2. In general, then, the opinions voiced at the meeting support the view I expressed to you in my memorandum of 8 December: Andropov's position is strong but he still must make the big moves to consolidate his power. So far, of course, nothing that has happened, at least publicly, has weakened him or helped any putative rivals (e.g., Chernenko, Shcherbitsky, Dolgikh, etc.). One interesting question for the future is how any prolonged hospitalization might effect his power to shape events. It is one thing to run the KGB from a hospital bed, as he has done a few times for periods of up to two months. It is quite another to move against political rivals and to ensure that they not

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move against your interests--not to oust you but to keep you from accumulating too much power. This situation suggests that it is probably in Andropov's interest to move quicker than the norms of Soviet political life suggest or that he himself might prefer. If so, the transition period will indeed be short. For policy planning, then, it would be prudent to assume that we only have some six months before Andropov is fully in charge. If we wish to take any initiative before that happens, we better move quickly.

SIGNED

Stanley M. Moskowitz

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